

## My birth story – 11 May 2010

In January 2008 when I gave birth to Aaron via C-section I was left feeling empty and useless. I didn't bond properly with him and ended up with post natal depression. I couldn't get my head around the fact that this little thing came out of my body – one moment I was pregnant the next I was a mom. It was an extremely difficult year for me and the effects of this are still being felt today. Aaron often doesn't want much to do with me and that makes me feel absolutely awful. I love him with all my heart and just want to cuddle him and erase the last two years. Slowly this is happening.

So naturally when I found out I was pregnant for the second time I had all these thoughts going through my head. At first I didn't really consider having anything other than a c-sec having been previously told by my doctor that once you have a C you cannot have natural birth and if you do you are in danger of rupturing and dying and/or killing your baby. But when I was around 20 weeks pregnant I started thinking "come on there must be a way" so I started my research and soon discovered the term VBAC and trial of labour. I did so much research that I could just about answer any question anyone had. I then approached my doctor and asked for a trial of labour – she would not even entertain the thought. The answer was NO!!! We booked my c-sec for 6 May 2010. I was disappointed and sad and once again felt like a failure. I tried to accept the fact but couldn't. Well the great news is that I didn't need to. Not long after that a colleague (Dieter) dropped the Star news paper on my desk which contained an article about Genesis clinic. I read it and then spent the next hour jumping round the office in delight. I was over the moon. I emailed the clinic immediately and received a response with loads of information almost immediately. I contacted one of the midwives that the clinic recommended and she told me to get in touch with the Growth Spurt midwives because if I was looking to have a VBAC they were my best bet. I phoned one of the midwives (Linda) and told her my story and my due date – she said that she thought they were full for May 2010 but she would find out and get back to me. Those hours were the longest ever – every time my phone made a peep my heart would start beating like crazy. Linda phoned me back with good news – they were not full and could take me on. YAY. I made an appointment to see them and was so excited I almost exploded with it. My excitement was short lived. I got home and told my husband about this, he promptly flew off the handle. At the time I was hurt and furious but looking back I understand why he was so upset – he had heard what my doctor had said about all the dangers (scare tactics) and obviously didn't want that to happen to me or our baby. I was determined anyway – I said that if he wouldn't support me I would do it on my own and that this was something I had to do otherwise I would regret it for the rest of my life. I was scheduled to see the midwife in just over a week when I went to work feeling awful – I was vomiting and my tummy was running, I left work early and on the way home got a phone call from the midwives rooms; they could see me in 2 hours time and because I was already 30 weeks pregnant they recommended I take the appointment. For a second I thought of not taking the appointment and sticking to my original appointment in a weeks time but I was soooooo determined I took it. I couldn't drive myself there because I couldn't stop vomiting so a friend drove me (shame she had to put up with the most horrendous smell in the car) we got there and I was determined not to look too ill so I put on a brave face. When I met with the first Growth Spurt midwife (Linda) I was over the moon – she was fantastic and saw no reason that I wouldn't be able to

try for a VBAC. I did however have to see their back up Gynae before I was 36 weeks pregnant – which in itself was a miracle because this man is booked up for 2 or 3 months but by the grace of God I got an appointment with him 2 days before I was 36 weeks. He did an ultrasound and was extremely pleased with the results – he said to me he saw no reason that I wouldn't be able to pull this off. Once again I just about bounced out of the clinic I was so delighted.

37 weeks came and went, so did 38 weeks. I was getting extremely impatient because I thought most babies arrive around 38 weeks. My midwife told me that actually most babies arrive around 40 to 41 weeks. Now this was a problem for me, I was sick of waiting. We had already discussed the way forward from 40 weeks because VBACs cannot be induced using chemicals/drugs so it either had to happen naturally or they could try to help things along with a couple of unspeakable procedures and I could go for reflexology. Because at 41 weeks 1 day I would have to have a cesar which I was determined not to have. So I started going for reflexology at 39 weeks and at 39 weeks 5 days I had a stretch and sweep (Monday 10 May 2010). My midwife told me that it was extremely unlikely that one stretch and sweep would put me into labour and I booked another one for the Friday. I went for more reflexology the Monday afternoon by which time I was having contractions but I kept thinking "no cant be they are not regular". By 4pm I was starting to think that maybe this could be it so I told my hubby to come home (he by the way had since come round and was 100% behind me – that was the power of pray). He came home and we were both not sure what was happening. I spoke to the midwife on duty and she suggested a nice hot bath, take 2 panados and relax which I did and the contractions didn't go away. So around 6:30pm we decided to go to the clinic. They monitored my contractions and babies heart and said that it was extremely early and I should go home. On the way home I decided I HAD to have a salad so we stopped at Nandos. While there I kept having contractions and the staff were giving me the eyeball – like don't have that baby here please!!! We got home and put on a movie and ate and lay on the bed. The contractions were getting more painful now and around 10 pm I said to Martin "babe I have either peed myself or my water just broke"!!! I then started to panic because the pain was getting really bad and the water was pinkish (I thought it should be clear), but the amazing midwife (Jeanelle) calmed me down over the phone and told me that when I was ready to come back to the clinic – I told her NOW. So back in the car we went to the clinic. By the time I we got there I was doubled over with the pain and I was pushed to my room in a wheel chair. Yip I was defiantly in labour but I kept thinking "is this really it?" By this time I was around 4cm dilated. Jeanelle arranged a TENS machine to help with the pain which initially did help a bit but nothing takes away that pain! At 12am Jeanelle went off duty and Henny came on duty – she would be the one to deliver my angel. She promptly put me on the birthing ball and showed me to breath correctly. Henny and Martin sat next to me rubbing my back and whispering quietly to each other. The other horrendous thing was that both Linda (that morning with the stretch and sweep) and Jeanelle and Henny had told me that my cervix was to far back and they would need to manipulate it, which can be quite painful – I started praying (Please God I am in so much pain already that I don't think I could handle that). Then Henny made the decision to give me pethadine and antrax to help me relax and sleep between contractions because I was so tired (having not slept the previous night) and I would need all the strength I could get when it came time to push. I was still only around 4 or 5 cm dilated. I slept for around 1.5 hours between contractions while Henny went for a nap and my poor exhausted husband also napped in the chair for a bit. When Henny returned the plan was

to reverse the pethadine and put me in the birthing bath for another hour or so but by the time she had reversed the pethadine and had done another internal she realized that I was 8cm dilated and then my push contractions started. (The wonderful news was that God answered my pray and my cervix had moved forward.) I was terrified. Henny was wonderful telling me to let my body work for me etc etc whilst trying to get the bath run asap because this baby was coming and nothing was going to stop her. I just remember Henny holding me to her chest and speaking calm words to me. The push contractions were like nothing I have ever felt – it felt like my tummy was going to run but that all my insides would fall out. I insisted on sitting on the loo because I was afraid I would have an accident otherwise. Henny just held me all the while I was sitting on the loo and nothing was happening and then the laughing gas arrived and then it promptly finished so Martin and the other midwife were trying to get a new bottle attached rather unsuccessfully because the plastic wouldn't come off the bottle.

Henny then led me to the bath and all I remember thinking was WOW! The lights were turned low, there were candles burning as well as a lovely smelling oil. The water was heavenly – it soothed me and made me feel weightless, combined with the laughing gas it was great – the contractions were still coming and the urge to push was huge. I was only in the bath around 10 minutes when Aimee started coming. Martin held me in the water so I could brace myself at the expense of his arms on the side of the bath. (love you babe) The next thing I knew I was pushing for all I was worth (the ring of fire was the worst pain EVER – it burnt like hell) and within a few minutes, plop my baby was in the water. Henny swam her around her cord and then told me to pick her up out of the water. WOW it was so amazing to look into that little face. She was beautiful and so peaceful, she didn't cry or perform, just so relaxed and calm. The entire experience was breathtakingly amazing. I was blown away by it. Martin got to cut her cord and then was instructed to take off his shirt so she could lie on his skin whilst they delivered my placenta and stitched me etc etc. I only had a superficial tear (skin only, no muscle) which Henny said she wouldn't usually stitch but because I was going home to a 2 year old it was a good idea to stitch it. Whilst I was being stitched Aimee was brought to me and immediately put to my breast and started suckling. My emotions were so raw – this was everything I had dreamed and more. Because of the wonderful place that we were (Genesis Clinic) Martin got to stay with me – in our king size bed – and slept for the next few hours! I in the mean time got up and had a shower and dressed my baby and fed her and started to get to know her. None of which I could do last time. This was the most liberating and fantastic experience ever – I would do it again in a heart beat. I actually really hope to do it again but for now our family is complete. Emotionally I am doing wonderfully (unlike last time where I was a mess for an entire year). I feel great, im loving the breast feeding where last time I hated it and only did it because I was guilted into it and then I felt worse of course. This whole birth experience has healed what happened to me last time and it has healed the wounds that were left as well. I feel like a woman for the first time. I did what God made me to do.

I cannot say enough thank you's to everyone who made this possible – I feel eternally indebted to all of you. God bless and keep up the good work.